

# **DYNAMIC CLASS INTERPOSITION**

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**DYNAMIC CLASS INTERPOSITION****FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention generally relates to client-server computing applications, and more particularly to accessibility of services in a mobile computing environment.

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**BACKGROUND**

A web-enabled device in its most basic form is a computing platform that provides a user with access to the World Wide Web. More specialized instances include web-enabled mobile telephones and web-enabled personal digital assistants (PDAs). The handheld devices are especially popular given their portability.

Web-enabled devices are expected to proliferate as prices fall and functionality increases. However, one hurdle impeding widespread acceptance is compatibility between services and the wide variety of web-enabled devices. The success of some web services and portable web-enabled devices are intertwined. For a particular service to be commercially successful, it is desirable for the service to be compatible with a variety of web-enabled devices and user expectations. Likewise, for a web-enabled device to be successful, the device must be compatible with a variety of services. The companies that provide the services and develop the devices are often faced with moving targets in terms of device capabilities and service requirements.

One choice for dealing with diverse devices is to implement applications in Java. The Java virtual machine provides a platform independent environment to host applications. However, even though Java works well for servlets and applets on desktop computers, Java is missing some infrastructure that is needed to support mobile execution of services. In particular, Java is lacking in support of transparent remote storage and disconnected operation.

For connection, storage, and other compatibility issues, prior solutions involved modifying the service application or modifying system software. One problem associated with these approaches is that access to the appropriate source code is required. In addition, the resulting solution may be platform dependent, which may limit the viability of the solution.

A system and method that address the aforementioned problems, as well as other related problems, are therefore desirable.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

In various embodiments, the invention extends the functionality of a first set of classes and methods in an application hosted by a computing arrangement without  
 5 modifying the application itself. A mapping is established that maps original class names in the first set to corresponding substitute class names of classes in a second set. The classes in the second set change the functionality of the classes in the first set. In response to loading a class file of a class in the first set, the original class names are replaced with corresponding substitute class names in the class file. Classes referenced by the substitute  
 10 class names are then instantiated in lieu of classes referenced by the original class names.

Various example embodiments are set forth in the Detailed Description and Claims which follow.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

15 Various aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent upon review of the following detailed description and upon reference to the drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram of a computing arrangement in which services are made accessible to client systems via downloadable applications;

20 FIG. 2 is a functional block diagram that illustrates the interposition of an interposed class for an original class in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 3 illustrates an example class file that has been modified by a class loader.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

25 FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram of a computing arrangement 100 in which services are made accessible to client systems via downloadable applications. Client 102 is the device through which a user interacts with a service 104 that is hosted by server system 106. Client 102 and server 106 are coupled via a network, for example the Internet or a organization's intranet 108. Example services include personal information  
 30 management services, travel services, and entertainment services. In general, the features provided by the service dictate the types of devices that are suitable for use as client 102. For some services, users may desire accessibility on a variety of devices ranging from workstations to hand-held devices.

Many services interact with users via downloadable application programs. For example, service 104 is initiated via a control mechanism that is provided at client 102. Based on application-specific requirements, the service at some time in its process flow transmits a downloadable application to client 102. The downloadable application  
 5 implements one or more functions that are associated with the service 104. Client 102 hosts software that executes the downloadable application.

Adaptations of legacy applications (services) to today's mobile computing environment must address the issues related to data storage and disconnection. To support remote storage and disconnections, either the application or the virtual machine has to be  
 10 modified. In changing the application source code, there will be a significant cost incurred, along with the possibility of introducing protocol/server dependencies into the application. Another problem is that the source code may be unavailable. If the virtual machine is modified, not only is access to the source code required, but all the different variants of the virtual machine must be maintained.

FIG. 2 is a functional block diagram that illustrates the interposition of an interposed class for an original class in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In one embodiment of the invention, standard Java application programming interface (API) classes and methods are extended without modifying either the application source code or the Java virtual machine and standard API library. For a Java-based  
 20 implementation, Java byte-codes are modified at load time and prior to resolution, such that standard Java application programming interface (API) class instantiations and method invocations are replaced by instantiations and invocations of extensions of the original class or substitutes of the original methods.

In a more general embodiment of the invention, a class loader 156 retrieves a class  
 25 file in response to a load class directive from the virtual machine 152. The virtual machine issues the load class directive in response to the constructor invoked by an application 152 executing within the virtual machine. It will be appreciated that the class may also be loaded in response to being referenced by another class. The class file 160, for example *foo.class*, can be read from either local or network storage. The class  
 30 *foo.class* references an example standard API class *bar.class*.

Classes 158 represents a set of classes to be transformed by class loader 156. Class loader 156 uses a list 162 of classes and methods to determine which classes and methods are to be interposed. List 162 maps names of classes and methods to

corresponding names of classes and methods to interpose. For example, an entry in the list maps *bar.class* to *interpose.bar.class*. Depending on implementation requirements, list 162 may also map methods that are to be interposed in addition to mapping classes. For example, “final” and “abstract” classes can not be extended. Thus, individual method invocations in substituted instead.

It will be appreciated that list 162 can be provided in various forms to class loader 156, for example as a downloadable configuration file or as a locally stored configuration file. Alternatively, the list may be statically built into the class loader..

After class loader 156 retrieves the class file for *foo.class*, references in the class file for *foo.class* to the class names and method names in list 162 are replaced with the corresponding name of the substitute class. For example, because *foo.class* includes the reference to *bar.class* and *bar.class* is in the list 162, references to *bar.class* in class file 166 are replaced with *interpose.bar.class*. In one embodiment, the modified class file is stored in class cache 164 to accelerate subsequent loading of subclasses and methods of *foo.class*. It will be appreciated that the class file need not be cached if the reduction in access time is not deemed beneficial relative to the costs associated with implementing and maintaining the cache. Thereafter, the modified class file, referencing *interpose.bar.class*, is returned to the virtual machine. Thus, the interposition of the substitute class is entirely transparent to the application 152 as well as virtual machine 154.

In the general case, classes 158 are classes that will be transformed by interposition of the interposed classes 170. For example, in a specific embodiment, classes 158 are selected Java system classes that are transformed. The interposed classes 170 are used in lieu of or as extensions of the selected Java system classes. It will be appreciated that in one embodiment, the interposed classes are installed on the client as a “middleware” software layer. Application 152 refers to the interposed classes 170 instead of classes 158 (e.g., the Java system classes).

The following description describes an example implementation of the present invention. The example implementation interposes substitute classes and methods for standard Java API classes and methods. The particular classes and methods that are interposed are selected to address various issues relating remote storage, disconnection, and concurrency within a single Java virtual machine.

Management of the user's data in a mobile environment impacts the Java implementation. For example, access to distant resources (Java classes, user data, URLs) must be detected and locally cached so that disconnection is a non-fatal event and performance remains acceptable. In order for an end-user's personal data and profiles to be available on the possible devices at the user's disposal, the data must be persistent and securely stored. This requirement implies a third party storage provider to store and retrieve the data. in the Java implementation, an objective is to support legacy services without imposing any software changes to support the remote storage. Many embedded and mobile devices do not facilitate remote storage. Because applications use the standard `java.io` package to store data, the Java implementation is arranged such that when methods are invoked from this package, the files are transparently loaded, refreshed and updated on the remote storage server. Similarly methods such as `java.awt.Toolkit.getImage` are redirected to the remote storage server.

Disconnection issues also impact the Java implementation. Continuous internet connectivity can be expensive and interruptions in service can be expected. Some types of services or applications may proceed locally if the user's data and URLs are cached on the client device. The cache content is regularly synchronized and flushed if required. IN the example embodiment, the Java implementation

Table 1 briefly summarizes the standard Java APIs that are modified.

Class	Reason
java.io.File java.io.FileInputStream java.io.FileReader java.io.FileWriter java.io.FileOutputStream java.io.RandomAccessFile java.io.PrintWriter java.util.zip.ZipFile	User files are cache locally. The cached local file is extended so that it be filled/refreshed/flushed from/to a remote storage server.
java.awt.FileDialog	The dialog browser must browse the content of the remote storage server.
java.awt.Toolkit	getImage() must lookup the remote storage thorough the cache.
java.net.URL	Cache URLs.
java.net.URLConnection	Handle post requests.

**Table 1**

The following paragraphs present example Java source code in which substitute classes and methods are interposed. The examples are presented for illustration only, and it will be clear from the discussion accompanying FIG. 2 that the application source is not required. The interposition is accomplished instead by modification to the class files.

The following example code illustrates interposition of a class. In the general case, interposition of the instances of class "A" with instances of class "interposed.A" requires that "new" statements and constructor invocations for class A be respectively replaced by "new" statements and constructor invocations for class "interposed.A". The following

class:

```

import java.io.File;

public class SimpleFile {
    static public File file;
    public File add() {
        return new File("add");
    }
    public static void main(String argv[]) {
        file = new File("aFile");
        String name = file.getName();
        file = new SimpleFile().add();
    }
}

```

is transformed as (changes underlined):

```

import interpose.java.io.File;

public class SimpleFile {
5   static public java.io.File file;
   public java.io.File add() {
       return new File("add");
   }
   public static void main(String argv[]) {
10      file = new File("aFile");
      String name = file.getName();
      file = new SimpleFile().add();
   }
}

```

15 The class public fields declaration (`File file`), and method signatures (`File add`) are not modified since they are exported outside of the class. The class extension would contain statements such as:

```

package interpose.java.io;
20 public class File extends java.io.File {
    public File(String name)
        throws NullPointerException{
        // .. our own initialization
    }
    public long lastModified() {
25        // ...
    }
    // other modified APIs ...
}

```

30 Since the newly created object is an extension, no other statements need to be modified. Any number of APIs from this class can be overwritten in the extension.

Because *abstract* and *final* classes cannot be interposed, the methods associated with these types of classes in interposed instead. Example final classes include

35 `java.net.URL`, `java.lang.System`, and `java.lang.Class`. Example abstract classes include `java.awt.Toolkit` and `java.net.URLConnection`. Instead of replacing new and `<init>` method invocations, calls to the class methods that need to be altered are replaced with calls to a static method of a new abstract class. The following is an example of the *getProperties* method from the `java.lang.System` abstract class.

40 An initial class such as:

```

public abstract class GetProperty {
    public static void main(String argv[]) {

```



```

String s;
s = System.getProperty("foo");
    }
}
5  would be modified to:
    public abstract class GetProperty {
        public static void main(String argv[]) {
            String s;
            s = interposed.System.getProperty("foo");
10         }
    }

```

An example new abstract file is:

```

15  package interpose.java.lang;
    public abstract class System {
        public static String getProperty(String s) {
            // ... any specific code ...
            return (String) ...;
        }
20    }

```

The following example relates to the final class java.net.URL:

```

import java.net.URL;
public class SimpleURL {
25     public static void main(String argv[]) {
        try {
            URL url = new URL("foo");
            InputStream is;
            is = url.openStream();
30         } catch (Exception e) {
        }
    }
}

```

35 The modified code would be:

```

import java.net.URL;
public class SimpleURL {
    public static void main(String argv[]) {
        try {
40            URL url = new URL("foo");
            InputStream is;
            is = interposed.java.net.URL.openStream(
                url);
        } catch (Exception e) {
45        }
    }
}

```

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An example new abstract class is:

```
package interpose.java.net;
public abstract class URL {
    public static InputStream
5         openStream(java.net.URL url)
        throws IOException {
        // ... specific code
        return (InputStream) ...
10    }
}
```

It will be appreciated that the substituted method may be a constructor (<init>) as it is the case for the URL (java.net.URL, java.lang.String) constructor.

Whereas for class interposition the replacement method initializes an instance of the extended class, in the final class the method must return (versus initialize) an instance of the initial class. Thus, the following class:

```
import java.net.URL;
public class SimpleURL {
    public static void main(String argv[]) {
20        try {
            URL url = new URL("foo");
            url = new URL(url, "bar");
        } catch (Exception e) {
        }
25    }
}
```

is replaced by:

```
import java.net.URL;
30 public class SimpleURL {
    public static void main(String argv[]) {
        try {
            URL url = new URL("foo");
            url = interposed.java.net.URL.URL(url,
35                "bar");
        } catch (Exception e) {
        }
    }
40 }
```

An example abstract class is:

```
package interpose.java.net;
    public abstract class URL {
        public static java.net.URL
45            URL(java.net.URL context,
```

```

                    String spec)
                throws MalformedURLException {
                // ... any specific code ...
                return (java.net.URL) ...
5          }
    }

```

FIG. 3 illustrates an example class file 202 that has been modified by class loader 156. The class file 156 includes a constant pool 204 and a set of descriptors. The constant pool includes constant types such as constant strings, class names (e.g., 206), method references, and method signatures. All references to constant types in a bytecode or other constant are stored as indices into the constant pool. Reference number 206 refers to the modified class name *interpose.bar.class*.

The set of descriptors describe fields, interfaces, methods (e.g., 208, 212), exception tables, and inner classes and other attributes of classes. Descriptors of fields, interfaces, and method descriptors include indices into the constant pool for the attribute name along with additional information that describes the attribute, for example, access flags, type, and initial value for a field or bytecode for a method. Reference number 210 refers to the modified bytecode for method 208. Note that not all substitute methods need not be provided for all the method codes in a class file. For example, method code 212 references a method for which no alternative method is interposed.

When loading a class, the class loader first checks the constant pool 204 of the class file to determine whether the class (or method) needs to be interposed before parsing the method bytecodes. If the class does not need to be interposed, then the method bytecodes don't need to be parsed for the interposed method. Because it is computationally expensive to parse the bytecodes, it is quicker to first check the constant pool, for example to see whether the *foo.class* refers to *bar.class*. If there is not reference, parsing the bytecodes is unnecessary.

Even though the invention is described in terms of service infrastructure such as Java, those skilled in the art will appreciate that teachings of the present invention could be adapted to other infrastructures, such as the .NET platform from Microsoft. It will also be appreciated that the invention is applicable to application programs that are not downloadable. In addition to the example embodiments described above, other aspects and embodiments of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is

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intended that the specification and illustrated embodiments be considered as examples only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.

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